

## THE WILLIAM ROCKHILL NELSON GALLERY OF ART

## AND ATKINS MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

NEWSFLASHES

June,

1939

LOAN EXHIBITIONS: During the month of June, the North Loan Gallery will be installed with a group of paintings, watercolours, and drawings by the late Robert B. Harshe, formerly Director of the Art Institute of Chicago. They will be of particular interest to Kansas City, as Dr. Harshe was a native of Missouri and it is the first time that his work has been seen here. Although he had a formal training as a painter, only his most intimate friends knew that all during his later life he spent his rare free moments at his easel. It was only after his death that a memorial exhibition of his paintings was held in the Art Institute and the present group has been selected from that showing.

Dr. Harshe was born in 1879 in Salisbury, Missouri, and was graduated from the University of Missouri. Although his college work has been spent in the field of engineering, he had always been interested in art and after receiving his degree, went at once to the Art Institute of Chicago to study painting. He had a very real talent for it and was encouraged to go to New York where he worked at the Art Students' League, and later went to Paris and London to continue his training.

On his return to America, he taught in several universities, at one time being an instructor in fine arts at the University of Missouri. His first museum appointment came in 1915 as director of the Oakland Gallery. At that time the Panama-Pacific Exposition was taking form and he was placed in charge of the art section, making trips to Europe to bring back well-known masters for the Fair. Then came an appointment to the Carnegie Institute of Pittsburgh, where he contributed much in the arrangement of the annual international exhibitions. He went to Chicago in 1920, became the Director the following year, and held that post until his sudden death in January, 1938. In addition to building up the collections there until the museum took rank among the foremost of the world, the two exhibitions he arranged in conjunction with the Century of Progress were a most notable contribution to the field of art.

The chief influence in the painting of Dr. Harshe was that of the Impressionists and of Degas and Bonnard. Their emphasis on light and colour, their lyric grace and air of spontaneity appealed to him, yet he was never a slavish imitator, but remained always vigorously personal. Daniel Catton Rich of the Art Institute has written as follows of the paintings in the exhibition: "Robert B. Harshe was no dilettante or amateur. You sense in each sketch or finished canvas a firm control over the pictorial elements. The work has vitality. It is painted with amazing strength and dash".

The present exhibition will open on Sunday, June 4. The Gallery is happy to have the opportunity to honour a former Missourian and to sponsor a memorial to one of his century's greatest museum directors.

AMERICAN LANDSCAPE PAINTINGS: A comprehensive survey of American Landscape Paintings as represented in the permanent collection will be installed in the Central Loan Gallery for the month of June and remain on exhibition through the summer.

It is interesting to note that while the school of portraiture of America of the 18th and early 19th centuries was strongly under the influence of Europe, when the native artists turned to landscape, the result was an entirely original expression. The men of the first group, the so-called Hudson River School, went directly to nature and copied faithfully and minutely what they saw. The permanent collection contains fine examples of this early period in "The Ferry" by Thomas Doughty, "Hudson River Landscape" by Asher Durand, and "White Mountains Landscape" by William Sonntag.

The work of these men may be considered the foundation of the fine landscape painting of the last half of the century in the work of George Inness, Homer Martin, and Alexander Wyant. All three are



represented in the permanent collection by characteristic examples. The approach to nature as depicted in the canvases of the Missouri artist, George Caleb Bingham, was a more homely one and our "Fishing on the Mississippi" is one of his best.

In the 1880's, many American painters went to Paris to study and came under the influence of the Impressionists with their emphasis on light and colour. To this group belongs Theodore Robinson whose "Duck Pond" is full of sunshine and the full greens of nature, and the "Harbor View Hotel" of J. H. Twachtman with its sensitive tonal harmonies.

Examples of a number of contemporary landscape painters will be included, among them Ernest Lawson, Nicolai Cikovski, Ross Braught, Robert Henri, Birger Sandzen. On the whole, the exhibition will present a comprehensive view of landscape painting as developed in America.

EXHIBITION OF SHAWLS: Through the generosity and cooperation of George E. Tucker of this city, the South Loan Gallery will be installed during the summer with a most comprehensive group of Cashmere Shawls and their French and Paisley imitations. Mr. Tucker is one of the foremost collectors in this country of these fascinating and colourful examples of the weavers' and embroiderers' craft and his collection contains many rare and unique specimens.

The derivation of our word "shawl" is Persian (shal) and one connects it instantly with the great squares of soft wool with their glowing harmonies of colours made from the fleece of a goat and worn as an article of clothing by the natives of Cashmere in Persia. These original shawls are made up of many small fragments of various colours, skillfully overworked by hand-embroidery and then sewn together. In the best examples, this piecing is so fine that it is almost impossible to detect or to feel the seams. The resultant shawl is rather heavy and definitely a warm article of clothing.

Cashmere shawls were brought into Europe in large numbers in the early 19th century and the shawl itself became a popular object of feminine apparel. The chief objection to the Persian originals was the expense and the excessive weight, so European manufacturers, especially in France and England, began to reproduce them by means of weaving alone. The typical Persian designs and soft, glowing colours were used and by the absence of embroidery, a lighter shawl resulted. The finest examples from France often have a white center and occidental flowers, vines, and ferns are combined with the more oriental motifs. Usually, too, the French shawls can be identified by silk warp threads.

Even better known are the imitations which were woven in Paisley, Scotland, a town which has given its name to the type of shawl as far as the western world is concerned. These are more slavish copies of the Cashmere originals, often are less subtle in colouring and often have centers of solid shades. They are more numerous than the French examples and often of less fine workmanship.

In the past few years there has been a growing interest in shawls and this comprehensive exhibition will furnish an excellent opportunity to study and to learn to distinguish the various types. From sheer beauty of workmanship and colouring, they can hold their own as works of art.

MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH: A recently acquired pen drawing, "Study of a Man Holding a Horse" by the French 19th century painter, Jean Louis André Theodore Gericault, will be featured as the Masterpiece. It comes from the famous Duc de Treviso collection of Paris and is the first example to come to the Gallery of this romantic painter who did so much to divert the attention of artists from the cold classicism of David and his followers.

Gericault was born in the picturesque cathedral town of Rouen, the son of wealthy parents. In his youth he had an inordinate interest in horses and spent all his free time at the circus or on the race course where he might see the noble animals in spirited action. He tried to draw them but was always discouraged by his family. Later they sent him to Paris for schooling and against their wishes he entered the studio of Guerin, an academic painter. His teacher felt that the young pupil had no talent and tried to dissuade him from an artistic career, but Gericault submitted a portrait to the Salon of



1812 and when it won the gold medal, he was convinced that he could paint.

His wealth enabled him to take an important position in Paris society, to enlist in a branch of the army that he might study horses more closely. Later he went to Rome to study and was fascinated by the Sistine Chapel frescos by Michelangelo and the spirited drawings of horses by Da Vinci. On his return to Paris, he painted his famous "Raft of Medusa", now in the Louvre, which depicted the suffering of a group of survivors from the wreck of a French vessel. He suffered ill health in the last years of his life and was killed when only thirty seven by a fall from a savage horse he was attempting to ride.

While in Rome, he often amused himself by watching the purely Italian sport known as the "Barberi", in which riderless horses with spurs on them were thrashed and excited into racing about the historic Piazza del'Popolo. He never failed to take his sketching pad with him and has left many studies of this fascinating sport which he meant to develop into a colossal canvas; a plan which never materialized. Our new drawing is one of these sketches, perhaps done right on the spot. It shows the superbly drawn figure of a nude man, from the back, full of action and spirit as he raises his right arm to whip the horse. The animal is lightly suggested in the background, rearing on its hind legs. Only a master draughtsman could have caught so much action with so few lines, only a keen observation and knowledge of horses could have given all the attributes of brute strength and fury.

Slight though this drawing is, it is a fitting example of the work of a man who has only recently come into his own as one of the world's finest draughtsmen and a leader in an important movement in the history of art.

GALLERY CHANGES: During the summer months, June to August, a selection of Japanese prints will be shown in Gallery XXIV. Last year through a series of monthly exhibitions the Gallery's collection of prints was displayed by schools. Now a single group will illustrate the history of popular prints from the late seventeenth century through the landscape print masters of the nineteenth century. Few fields of art demonstrate in so lucid a way the rise, maturity, and decline of a movement. Within the space of two hundred years and in a single, rather limited medium, we may see the forceful experiments of the primitives, then the culmination when representation and content seem in perfect balance, and finally the gradual decline through over refinement and loss of vitality. Each stage in the evolution of Japanese print maker's art will be exemplified by two or three prints from the hand of the leading master of the period. The coloured wood-block prints were a popular art and while they hold to the best conventions of Oriental design, they do not express any profound ideas of Oriental thought. Thus they serve as the most simple yet stimulating introduction to the pictorial art of Asia.

For the summer months, Gallery XIII will be installed with a comprehensive selection of drawings from the permanent collection. The following artists will be included, Tiepolo, Perugino, Pietro Longhi, Bandinelli, Watteau, Hubert Robert, Manet, Cluade Lorraine, Ingres, Fragonard, Degas, Van Dyck, Rowlandson, Steen, Metsu, de Hooch, and Whistler. Gallery XVI will be hung with a group of prints featuring the finest examples of such men as Rembrandt, Durer, Hals, Goya, Pollaiuolo, Mantegna, and Schongauer.

GALLERY ACTIVITIES: Mr. Gardner the Director, will attend the annual meeting of the Association of Museum Directors, to be held this year in San Francisco during the latter part of June.

The Gallery's attendance has shown a considerable increase during 1939 over the same period of 1938. This is due in part to the enthusiastic response of out-of-town schools to invitations urging them to include the Gallery on their spring trips. During March, April and May more than five thousand out-of-town school children from 225 different towns in Missouri, Kansas, Iowa, and Nebraska have visited the Gallery. Perhaps two-thirds of this number have received a specially conducted tour.



June, 1939

EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES:

Summer Classes for Children: Registration for the summer classes for children will begin Saturday, June 3rd. The twenty lessons, which start Tuesday, June 13th, will meet from 10:00 to 12:00 every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday morning through July 29th. The enrollment fee of \$1.00, plus a thirty five cent supply fee in some classes, covers the expense of the course for the child. The following classes will be offered:

- A - Techniques - Mr. Roth (Selected group, class filled)
- B - Drawing - Mr. Berkeley - 12 years and over (30 pupils)
- C - Drawing - Mr. Voegele - 10-12 years (30 pupils)
- D - Drawing - Miss Rosenthal - 7-9 years (30 pupils)
- Marionettes - Mr. Manning, Miss Woodruff, Miss Hoover - 12 years or over unless experience in Miss Rosenthal's Puppet Class - (30 pupils)
- Clay Modeling - Mr. Ruddick, Mr. Smith, Mr. Koontz - 10 years and over - (30 pupils)
- General Crafts - Miss Nelson, Miss Barton - 10 years and over (30)
- Gallery Games - Miss O'Donnell - 7-9 years (30 pupils)

Free activities offered on Saturday through the six weeks summer session for which no enrollment is necessary:

Game Tray - 10:00 A.M. - 12:00 M  
1:00 P.M. - 4:30 P.M.

Junior Docents - Any child interested in studying the gallery room by room with the objective of becoming a qualified guide is welcome to join this class which meets at one o'clock every Saturday afternoon.

"Drawing for Fun"- Will be resumed on Saturday, June 17th, with Miss Jane Rosenthal conducting the group. Any child may attend "Drawing for Fun" in the Atkins Auditorium at 2:30 P.M. every Saturday. An ability to draw well is not necessary to the enjoyment of this activity.

Settlement House Extension Program: Due to the generosity and charming hospitality of Mrs. Fletcher Cowherd, a benefit garden tea and exhibition of children's paintings, done by Mrs. Cowherd's class at Minute Circle Friendly House, has provided the Educational Department with a fund sufficient to start a gallery extension program in the settlement houses of the city. Volunteers, working under the supervision of the gallery, will plan story hours, crafts, and drawing classes, using the gallery collection as a basis. It is hoped we will be able to bring these children to the gallery from time to time, if transportation can be provided. The fund will go to buy the necessary materials needed in the drawing and craft classes. Miss Frances Webb, Miss Margaret Hagstrom, and Mrs. U. L. Riley are already conducting groups at Mattie Rhodes, Guadalupe, and West Side Community Centers.



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